BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

Education Report

Right to left: Premier Gordon Campbell and Education Minister Shirley Bond turn their attention to keynote speaker and adult learner Ellen Sista at the Summit on Learners and Literacy, January 26 in Vancouver.

Province Unveils $27-Million First Phase of Literacy Plan

ReadNow BC aims to increase the number of children who enter school with the pre-reading skills they need to succeed, and to improve reading skills among school-age children, Aboriginal people and adults. Phase one of ReadNow BC was announced at the Summit on Learners and Literacy where discussions included ways to better engage communities in literacy. Read more.

HOT TOPIC

Graduation portfolios were intended to allow students to demonstrate their successes outside of traditional academic classes and to help those students prepare for success beyond high school.

However, many students, parents and educators felt the portfolio was too complex and overly time-consuming for students to work through and for teachers to assess.

Ministry staff held consultations around the province and carried out a review.

Now, government is acting to make the graduation portfolio more streamlined and flexible to better help students prepare for life after high school.

Starting in 2007/08, students will be required to complete three standards to graduate:

- 80 hours of physical activity;
- 30 hours of work experience or community service; and,
- a graduation transition plan.

Boards may choose to have students develop a portfolio to demonstrate they have met the standards or boards may use other ways to ensure students have completed the expectations.

Students who meet the standards will receive four credits that count toward graduation.

The Ministry of Education will provide school boards with information sessions and materials to support the standards, including a teacher resource guide and a student planner.

The graduation standards will help students gain valuable life skills while offering boards more flexibility in how students meet the mandatory standards.

Read more.

Highlight: LearnNow BC

LearnNow BC, the Province's virtual school, continues to be popular with students.

During the week of January 22–28, Science 10 self-assessment tests were taken over 1,230 times, Science 10 lessons were viewed almost 630 times, and one-to-one tutoring was requested 1,440 times.

The Ministry of Education recently secured software licenses allowing teachers access to LearnNow BC so that they too can take advantage of its many resources.

Journey to the Red Sea
Eva Ibbotson

Message from Minister Shirley Bond

Photographer: Paula Wood
Minister of Education

This is a very exciting time for education in the province. Last week, the Premier announced the $27 million first phase of ReadNow BC—government's literacy plan.

Programs that are part of this first phase include:

- $12 million the BCSTA will use to support early learning initiatives;
- $5 million for StrongStart early learning centres;
- $5 million to help Literacy Now address community literacy needs around BC;
- $3.5 million for the kindergarten-readiness program Ready, Set, Learn;
- $1 million to expand community-based adult literacy work;
- $500,000 for ReadNow BC DVDs and booklets, a website and the toll-free reading hotline 1-888 Read234, and a web-based resource to connect educators.

Our first great goal is to make B.C. the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent. I'm proud to say that by working together we've made progress, including raising the provincial high school completion rate to a record 79 per cent.

However, results have levelled off; in fact, the school completion rate has held at 79 per cent for the last four years. ReadNow BC is an integral part of the Province's Pacific Leadership Agenda, which lays out how government will move beyond its current success and achieve its great goals. Read more.

Reading Corner

When Maia is orphaned, she is sent to live with relatives in Brazil. She is excited about experiencing this new country and culture, but her relatives act as if they still lived in England. Maia befriends a boy who enjoys Brazil as much as she does, but what can she do to stop his impending return to the United Kingdom? This book is suitable for students in grades 4–7.